My baby’s first weeks

During the first days after birth, your baby has to adapt to life outside of the womb. This is a time of adjustment that most babies manage easily. Sometimes problems happen that can make your baby unwell. This guide will help you to recognise what is normal in a healthy baby, and also help you recognise if your baby is unwell or if they should be seen by a health professional.

What does a healthy baby do?

> Many babies are sleepy for the first 12 hours after birth, but usually they will feed at least once by 6-8 hours after birth. After 12 hours of life most babies wake and demand a feed every 3-4 hours
> Breathes quietly and comfortably. When asleep the breathing rate is less than 60 breaths in a minute
> Moves arms and legs, opens eyes, and responds to touch or noises by startling or crying
> Has pink lips and tongue
> Passes wee and poo at least once in the first 24 hours, and then several times a day for the first week
> Babies often sneeze and have a snuffy nose. A snuffy nose can be normal if your baby can suck and feed comfortably
> For support with parenting, breastfeeding or settling your baby, contact CaFHS.

When should I ask for advice?

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The main problems a baby can have in the first days – week of life are infections, low blood sugar levels, heart problems, seizures, jaundice and bowel problems.

**Call a doctor or midwife urgently if your baby has any of these:**

- Not waking up to feed for 8 or more hours
- Is floppy or not responding normally i.e. very sleepy or difficult to wake and not kicking or moving normally
- Has trouble feeding because of breathlessness
- Breathing is fast (more than 60 breaths a minute when asleep)
- You hear a grunting noise with each breath or baby is “sucking” in chest as though breathing is difficult
- Cry is weak or unusual
- Back arching or jerking of arms or legs
- Skin and possibly whites of eyes look yellow in the first 24 hours (jaundice)
- Frequent vomiting or vomit that is green or contains blood
- No wee or poo in the first 24 hours
- Baby is unusually warm (temperature > 38°C) or cold (temperature < 36°C) despite removing or adding clothing
- If you are worried about your baby
- If you or your partner are feeling overwhelmed
- Any of these findings may indicate a serious problem and urgent assessment by your midwife, hospital doctor or GP is recommended.

**Call an ambulance: Dial 000, if your baby:**

- Stops breathing or turns blue (meantime hold baby with head down and pat his/her back firmly)
- Has a fit/convulsion/seizure
- Is not responding to loud noises, a bright light shone in his eyes or a gentle pinch on the arm, when they are awake.